

Office of Farmland Preservation

What the State Buys:

- *Increase in the number of operating farmland preservation programs from the current 4 to a new number of 12 by the end of the biennium;*
- *Increased assistance for the remaining thirty-five (35) counties that do not have farmland preservation programs;*
- *Published guidelines for "model" farmland preservation programs and agricultural easements*
- *Specific identification the opportunities for additional state investment in farmland preservation;*
- *The ultimate measure of programmatic success will be seen further down the road, in the number of agricultural acres protected and programs established and functioning*
(NOTE – A report will be produced at the end of the first half of the biennium that includes the initial findings of the Washington Farmland Preservation Task Force which is established by this proposal. The report will contain the guidelines for “model” programs and easements, the first phases of a capital budget needs assessment, as well as analysis of progress in local assistance and program development. In the second half of the biennium, a report will be produced finalizing the capital budget needs assessment, delineating the success of the Program in establishing new local programs and strengthening existing programs, and sharing the success of the pilot grant program.)

The Office of Farmland Preservation will provide technical assistance, tailored to local needs, to communities across Washington wanting to develop farmland preservation programs. It will also supply needed legal and facilitation services to communities as they develop their programs. The Agricultural Conservation Easements Program was established in 2002, along with the Agricultural Conservation Easements Account (RCW 89.08.530 and 89.08.540, respectively), but was not funded at that time and, therefore, not implemented. The Office of Farmland Preservation will provide funding and technical assistance to localities across Washington for voluntary farmland preservation programs and administer the agricultural conservation easements account. The Office of Farmland Preservation will be housed in the Washington State Conservation Commission.

Watershed Data Pilot Project

What the State Buys:

- *Better accountability between conservation practices and projected results*

This funding request will continue the Watershed Data Pilot Project, and enhance the system based upon the results of the pilot project. In addition, 10 more conservation districts will be added to the system in FY 2007-2009.

Cultural Resource Investigations

What the State Buys:

- *Increased landowner participation in projects to improve natural resources;*
- *Increased protection of Cultural Resources*

When public dollars are spent to achieve a public benefit on privately owned lands, and in the course of achieving that public benefit, cultural resources are impacted; the private landowner is currently liable for the costs of cultural resource investigations. This program would reimburse cooperating landowners for those expenses to help reduce a significant financial barrier to implementation of riparian and nonpoint improvement projects. This program represents the Commissions' implementation of Executive Order 2005-05, foster understanding between tribal governments and private landowners as well as provide training to conservation district personnel regarding cultural resources.

Engineering Design & Federal Coordination

What the State Buys:

- *Increased implementation of conservation practices by private landowners;*

- ***Better partnership between the State and the Federal Government***

An installation backlog of 5,898 conservation practices currently exists in Washington State. Land managers throughout the state have contracted for these practices through the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other USDA conservation programs. A lack of needed available technical assistance and engineering services has led to this practice application backlog. The Technical Service Provider (TSP) program will provide the needed state funding to match the 50% contribution match needed to receive federal funding with assistance to be provided by conservation districts. The funding request includes \$928,000 state matching funds, authorization to receive and expend the matching amount of federal funding (\$928,000) and the \$300,000 needed to support engineering technical services related to conservation district engineering assistance for conservation practice application.

Supporting Local Accountability

What the State Buys:

- ***Continued public accountability for district programs***

Financial support necessary to assure regular and timely audits of conservation district operations will be provided in fulfillment of statutory obligations of the State Conservation Commission and the State Auditor. Audits assure citizens their local conservation district is appropriately managing public funds and operating properly. Centralizing payment of local conservation district audits promotes efficiencies with the State Conservation Commission and State Auditor; lack of centralization would increase audit costs.

Continuing Capacity Building

What the State Buys:

- ***Increased capability for local conservation districts to meet local needs***

This funding request will be support critical infrastructure needs of local conservation districts. This money will help many rural districts meet locally identified goals aimed at achieving natural resource education, protection, enhancement, and restoration. Grants will be provided to conservation districts as authorized under RCW 89.08.410, and will be distributed based on identified need, ability to provide local leverage, or match and long-term capacity enhancement.

Comprehensive WQ Service Delivery

What the State Buys:

- ***Proactive statewide protection of water quality by implementing approved nutrient management and other non-livestock conservation plans including:***
 - ***Direct technical assistance to livestock and other agricultural producers and shellfish producers including: GIS Services for landowners and partner agencies; Education and newsletters; PAM Cost Share; Invasive species control; Drop Structures, Waterways, Terraces, Zero till programs, Stubble mowing; Water quality sampling and monitoring; Irrigation Water Management Plans; Livestock nutrient management and other BMP implementation; Riparian planting, instream structure, bank protection/stabilization & erosion control;***
 - ***Watershed Planning and Coordination; Early action items from Watershed planning; Riparian restoration; Stream gauging;***
 - ***TMDL mitigation***
- ***The impacts of growth are addressed by increasing conservation district service to over 2000 of district's fastest growing clientele, small acreage landowners;***
- ***24 conservation districts are provided the resources to supply "Stormwater Phase II" municipalities with a low-cost option by increasing implementation of Low Impact Development practices in new and existing development.***

This package comprehensively addresses the natural resource needs of all types and sizes of privately owned land by combining efforts on four important issues related to improving and then maintaining

water quality on privately owned lands. Those issues are, livestock nutrient management, water quality project implementation, small acreage landowners, and low impact development. This program better addresses local issues and increases efficiency of service delivery by allowing for one comprehensive water quality program rather than four.

Puget Sound Partnership Plan Implementation

What the State Buys:

- *Direct technical assistance to agricultural producers and shellfish producers and other landowners for the development of conservation plans for TMDL mitigation; Riparian planting, instream structure, bank protection/stabilization & erosion control; Cover crop programs to reduce sedimentation of waterways; Marine shoreline workshops, and site visits for as well as cost share for marine riparian zone and shoreline habitat enhancement projects; Education and newsletters; as well as Provide technical and financial assistance to landowners not covered by other programs*
- *Provide technical assistance to county governments and other agencies to resolve water quality complains (referrals),*
- *Design & implementation of near-shore eelgrass and riparian restoration directly related to 303(d) listed streams and other degraded water bodies*
- *Implement monitoring program to determine program effectiveness and provide for adaptive management*
- *Watershed Planning and Coordination; Water quality sampling and monitoring*

This package implements the recommendations of the Puget Sound Partnership, The Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan, and the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound as they relate to improvement of habitat and water quality on privately owned lands. This program provides private landowners with technical, educational and project design assistance from the 12 Puget Sound Conservation districts to work with landowners proactively, voluntarily, and on a non-regulatory basis with issues including but not limited to: air quality issues, erosion, pesticide use, manure, water quality/quantity issues from the impacts of livestock, crop production, forest health, wildlife habitat concerns, energy consumption, and potential urban-rural interface conflicts.

Enhance Commission Capacity

What the State Buys:

- *Better decisions by policy makers with the addition of the WSCC delivery system in more policy discussions.*

The Conservation Commission has reached a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness, but there is a critical need for additional staff to meet the ever-increasing expectations. This request is for one-mid level FTE to coordinate policy development, rule development and implementation, as well as inter-agency and external outreach. The link that the Commission has through conservation districts to reach private landowners and involvement in critical and strategic natural resource decision making processes is essential in moving comprehensive policies forward, and at risk, without additional support

Agreements and Business Expenses

What the State Buys:

- *Increased ability for WSCC to be a reliable interagency partner on information technology.*

This funding request will be used by the Conservation Commission to support critical information technology infrastructure needs. The Conservation Commission is co-located with Ecology and relies primarily on Ecology for its essential information technology services. Software licenses, email hosting and web design/service have not been functions previously supported by Ecology and are required for the agency. This request will offset additional interagency service costs; software licenses which are the responsibility of the agency, and web design/hosting expenses.